

VZCZCXRO0211
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0323/01 0390801
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 080801Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1602
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0289
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0080
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0769

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000323

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/07/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: UNSYG BAN KI MOON IN BAGHDAD

BAGHDAD 00000323 001.4 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: In a cordial February 6 meeting with Ambassador Crocker and General Odierno, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon said he was deeply impressed by the progress Iraq has made since his last visit in March 2007. The international community, led by the U.S., has achieved much and the close U.S.-UN working relationship has been crucial in this regard. This close cooperation will be essential as we transition into a period where political reconciliation and social/economic development will take on an increasingly important role. Ambassador Crocker and General Odierno underscored the very positive signal Ban's visit sends in the wake of Iraq's just-completed provincial elections, both to Iraqis and to the international community. The leadership of SRSB Staffan di Mistura, and the dedication and professionalism of the UN team has won praise from all of Iraq's disparate communities. This will be of great importance as the UN now works to mediate such difficult issues as Kirkuk and Disputed Internal Borders (DIBs). The Ambassador and CG encouraged Ban to continue expanding the UN's activities and presence in Iraq, something they said the U.S. will do all it can to support. Ban relayed that President Obama had called him soon after the inauguration to stress the importance of the UN Mission in Iraq. In response, Ban said the President would have his full support in this continued effort. End Summary.

12. (C) UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon paid a one-day visit to Baghdad February 6, meeting with President Talabani, Prime Minister Maliki and Vice Presidents Hashimi and Abdul Mehdi. The SYG's visit was fully supported by U.S. military assets. Following his meetings with GOI officials, accompanied by UN Under Secretary General Lynn Pascoe and SRSB Staffan di Mistura, he met with Ambassador Crocker and General Odierno.

Close U.S.-UN Relationship:
Key to Success

13. (C) Secretary General Ban opened the meeting by thanking Ambassador Crocker and General Odierno for all that has been achieved under their leadership. Although only in Baghdad a few hours, Ban said the changes since his March 2007 visit were striking. This couldn't have happened without the international community's involvement, led by the U.S. Several times during the meeting, the SYG offered effusive praise and thanks for the support the U.S. has provided UNAMI, for Ambassador Crocker's and the CG's personal contributions, and for the logistical assistance without which he said "my trip here today would not have been possible." Ban noted that President Obama had called him soon after the inauguration to stress the importance of the

UN Mission in Iraq and the key role of SRSg di Mistura. Ban said he had departed on his current multi-country trip before he could report back to the President on issues the President had raised. Ban made a point of saying "whatever he has told me and asked me has been well-taken care of. He doesn't need to worry about it -- he has my full support."

Transition, Emphasis on Social-Economic
Development and the ICI

14. (C) The year ahead will be a time of transition, Ban observed: for Iraq, for U.S-Iraqi relations and for the United States itself. He said that he had advised Prime Minister Maliki earlier in the day that Iraq's relations with the U.S. "should be based on the full engagement and full participation of the international community." Picking up on the UN's evolving role in Iraq, Ban said it "will continue doing what it has been doing, but more -- political reconciliation, constitutional reform, refugees, human rights, and the social-economic dimension." On the latter point, he said he hoped to convene the next meeting of the International Compact for Iraq (ICI) in May.

Visit Sends A Powerful Signal; UNAMI's Work Respected by All

15. (C) Ambassador Crocker and General Odierno both emphasized that Ban's visit at this particular moment sends a powerful signal of the international community's support for Iraq's democratic development. The Ambassador emphasized that the success of the provincial elections would not have happened without SRSg di Mistura's leadership and the UN

BAGHDAD 00000323 002.5 OF 002

team's expertise and assistance. These elections are a dress rehearsal for national elections later in the year, he noted, and the experience gained has been invaluable. The Ambassador added that UNAMI's work in the elections has been praised all of Iraq's communities, something that will give the UN added purchase as it works to mediate the Kirkuk/Article 23 process and issues related to Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs). The Ambassador also commended the SRSg for expanding the UN's activities in Iraq and in encouraging UN Specialized Agencies to return. As security improves, the Ambassador noted, the issues that are the purview of these agencies will only increase in importance.

Improved Security, Reduced U.S. Footprint,
But Continued Support for International Organizations

16. (C) General Odierno then provided the SYG with a security update. Attacks over the past 10-12 weeks, the CG said, are at the lowest level since July-August 2004. This is due to a number of reasons, including increased efforts by the Iraqi Security Forces and the rejection of extremist elements by the Iraqi population. The CG agreed that 2009 will be a year of transition. It will be marked by a decrease in the number of U.S. forces, the expected departure of non-U.S. coalition troops by May/June, and a shift from counter insurgency to stability operations. The CG stressed that while U.S. forces will decrease in line with the President's call for a responsible withdrawal, they will be at levels necessary to help international organizations take on more responsibilities. As the security situation improves, the CG observed, political issues will get more complex. It is essential that Iraqis tackle these issues peacefully. To this end, the CG said, the U.S. intends to work with all international organizations to help them help the GOI.

17. (C) UN Under Secretary General Lynn Pascoe asked whether it was likely that UN officials would be able to operate in a more normal fashion around the country in the near term. General Odierno judged that in 80% of Iraq, coalition forces can support officials going out but that we are not yet at a place where he would be comfortable seeing officials go out alone without security. The Ambassador agreed with the CG's assessment and added that the time is right for a careful evaluation and review of how we all approach security in Iraq. The U.S. Embassy, he noted, has already started a process of "Iraqizing" its security program that will include selecting and training Iraqi police and, over time, creating an Iraqi security cadre akin to that at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut.

Iraq Will be a Story Years in the Telling

18. (C) USYG Pascoe then asked Ambassador Crocker for his assessment of Iraq's political future. The Ambassador responded that Iraq will be a story years in the telling. It will not be about just one election or several, he noted, but about the way in which Iraqis work through the problems and disagreements they face. The Ambassador noted that President Talabani's decision to go personally to Kirkuk in order to bring the various parties together, as well as KRG President Barzani's willingness to receive a delegation of Kirkuk Arabs and hear out their complaints, are positive indicators that Qand hear out their complaints, are positive indicators that necessary compromise is possible. The Ambassador noted that Iraq's leaders understand this is the best chance they have.

Iraqi UN Peacekeepers?

19. (C) As the meeting drew to a close, SRS di Mistura shared an interchange he had had the day before with GOI Defense Minister Abdul Qadir. In response to Abdul Qadir's comments that the Iraqi Army is becoming ever more professional, di Mistura said he suggested that Iraq consider contributing an army battalion to UN peacekeeping operations. This, he told Abdul Qadir, would be a clear signal that Iraq can be both a recipient and a provider of international assistance. Abdul Qadir's reaction was enthusiastic, di Mistura recounted, and he promised he would follow-up. Ambassador Crocker remarked that Iraqi UN peacekeepers certainly would be a welcome development and a role the Iraqi Army has never played before.

CROCKER